

SUBJECT	Progress Report: Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement
MEETING:	Audit Committee
DATE:	12th September 2019
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Audit Committee with an update on the authority’s progress against the Wales Audit Office (WAO) proposals for improvement up to September 2019 so that the committee can assure itself of the effectiveness of the authority’s response to proposals.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That members consider the current position of proposals and future actions being taken to address them seeking assurance that adequate progress is being made.

2.2 That members refer on any issues contained within WAO national studies to other committees for consideration where they identify there are findings of particular relevance to the council.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 Each year Wales Audit Office undertake a Performance Audit work programme with the council. The reports issued by WAO as a result of this work programme are able to make the following interventions for areas that are deemed as requiring improvement:

- proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council, WAO would expect Council to do something about them and will follow up what happens;
- formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made, the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
- conduct a special inspection, publish a report and make recommendations;
- recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way

3.2 The proposals in appendix 1 were issued to the council as a result of the performance audit work conducted by the WAO since the Corporate Assessment in March 2015, as this is the most recent comprehensive assessment of the council. There are no statutory recommendations contained within this update; the update contains lower-priority issues, known as proposals for improvement. Recommendations from the ‘Safeguarding arrangements – Kerbcraft scheme’ report have been reported separately to Council.

3.3 This update builds on the most recent update provided in November 2018 as part of the frequent reporting in place. Where progress and evidence for a proposal suggests it has been adequately addressed, the proposal has been “closed” and removed from the report. An overview of these is provided in appendix 2. Proposals that require further attention are marked as “open”, while some proposals have been combined where the issues covered and/or the action the council is taking to respond to them are strongly linked. Some of the forward looking actions committed by the authority are likely to be reflected within other council strategic documents such as the Council’s corporate plan, enabling strategies, the Whole Authority Strategic Risk Assessment and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

3.4 The proposals made by WAO are grouped into the following areas; Human Resources, Performance Management, Partnership & collaboration, Governance, Finance, Information Technology, Information Management, Asset Management, Children’s safeguarding and Service User Perspective. Each proposal update highlights:

- The report within which the proposal was made

- The specific proposal, or more than one proposal if they are closely linked.
- The progress made up to September 2019 to address the issues identified by the proposal.
- Whether the status of the proposal is to remain “open” or be “closed” if the evidence of progress suggests it has been sufficiently addressed.
- Any further actions that will be taken to address the proposal if it remains open.

3.5 The specific WAO reports, and accompanying management responses, are also presented to Audit Committee as they are produced. More recent reports produced will have limited progress to report at this stage. An overview of the outcome of the Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of developing a range of options to improve rural transport review has been included in appendix 1. WAO did not make proposals for improvement in this report but did highlight some areas of development, which the Council plans to act on. All of the recent reports issued by Wales Audit Office as part of their performance audit work programme, including the council’s initial management response, are available on the Performance Management section of the Hub (the council’s Intranet site) for members to view.

3.6 Wales Audit Office also produce an annual report called the Annual Improvement Report (AIR) summarising the work undertaken in the council during that year and concluding on the council’s prospects for improvement. The last AIR published in June 2019 concludes:

“The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement. Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2019-20.”

3.7 In addition to the work programme, WAO also make recommendations in local government national reports. Although these have not been issued directly to the council, like the other proposals, the recommendations from the national reports could be relevant to the council’s services. The reports are published on www.audit.wales/publications a list of the recently published reports and a brief overview is provided in appendix 3. These were circulated to the responsible officer(s) when they were published. Audit Committee has a role in ensuring the council considers the findings of the reports and can refer them to another scrutiny committee if they feel the reports require further consideration. The committee may also refer issues to Democratic Services Committee who are able to perform a coordinating function.

3.8 WAO, as part of their ongoing annual audit work programme, may follow up progress in any of the open or recently closed proposal areas.

4. REASONS

To ensure the authority responds appropriately to the WAO proposals to secure the improvements required.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Finances and any other resource implications of activity related to responses to the proposals will need to be taken into account by the relevant responsibility holders.

6. AUTHORS

Emma Davies, Performance Officer

Richard Jones, Performance Manager

e-mail: richardjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01633 740733

Open Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement

Human Resources Proposals

Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 Human Resources: Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016			
WAO Proposal	Ensure that the planned revisions and changes made to ‘Check In Check Out’ deliver a clear process of assessing and improving the performance of all staff and that department, team and individual objective setting is in line with the Council’s corporate objectives.	Status	Open	
	Improve oversight and ongoing implementation of the staff appraisal process. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure staff appraisal completion is uploaded onto the Council’s Hub to accurately reflect the numbers of staff in receipt of an annual appraisal; • increase the appraisal completion rate. 			
What progress have we made	<p>Work is continuing in order to increase understanding of the Check In, Check Out (CICO) process and maximise completion; it has been included in the new manager’s Induction training.</p> <p>A longer term, more effective recording module was developed that allowed managers to record the completed CICO directly into the HR system. This has had varying degrees of success due to a number of factors, namely issues with the system preventing the input of CICOs, and also reports from some managers that they prefer to complete the CICOs differently and not utilise the system as they feel it provides a better experience for their staff. To enable managers to complete the reviews in a way that suits them and their teams, all managers have been instructed to input the completed CICO numbers into their quarterly business plan updates. This way, the CICO rate can be recorded without the need to impose the electronic system. Information has been provided via service business plan update guidance to support managers to utilise the plans to record rates of completed CICOs.</p> <p>Furthermore, HR are currently undertaking a ‘visioning’ exercise ahead of plans to procure a new HR/payroll system next year. CICO or performance appraisal is on the list of requirements for the new system.</p>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Check-in, Check-out is well understood, consistently applied and informs staff development	Increase understanding and use of the check-in, check-out recording process	Head of People Services	June 2020

Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015 Human Resources: Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – December 2016			
WAO Proposal	Develop the Council’s workforce planning arrangements by including accurate data and key management information around workforce issues and statistics, reporting regularly to Senior Leadership and Management Teams to enable effective monitoring of progress and management of these issues on an ongoing basis.	Status	Open	
	Develop further workforce data to include staff establishment, contract status, vacancies, agency use, age, gender, and grade/pay distribution, to better inform future workforce planning activity.			
What progress have we made	Progress has been made with accurate data reporting. The HR data dashboards provide accurate, real time information and workforce data for service areas and DMTs. They provide detailed information in terms of the workforce data for a directorate and a breakdown for each service area/school. Furthermore, HR are currently undertaking a ‘visioning’ exercise ahead of plans to procure a new HR/payroll system next year. The use and availability of data will feature heavily in developing plans for the new system.			
	A workflow has been developed to enable service leaders to effectively focus on succession and workforce planning, and for directorates to develop plans for their workforce. HR attend DMTs, and other management meetings, where the workforce data is discussed, organisational insight is provided, and relevant actions undertaken where appropriate. Workforce planning discussion occurs naturally as part of HR Business partner meetings, at DMTs, and also at meetings between HR and the chief officers. To assist, have tools and advice is available on the Council’s intranet, the Hub. As part of the activity around workforce planning, agency worker information is provided on a regular basis to chief officers for discussion at DMT.			
	The revised People Strategy reflects what colleagues, data and intelligence is telling us needs to improve to enable and support our workforce. Work to evaluate the impact of the new strategy will begin shortly. All relevant actions associated with the strategy are contained within the People Service’s business plans.			
Further action planned	Mandatory training for managers on staff attendance and well-being is an ongoing process. The ‘Induction for New Managers’ has been introduced and covers attendance management and wellbeing.			
	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Workforce statistics are available at team level in a timely manner	Continue to develop and Implement new workforce data dashboards on My view	Head of People Services	June 2020

Partnership and collaborative working proposals

Report	Performance Management: Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – July 2016			
WAO Proposal	Ensure new Public Service Board (PSB) delivery plans clearly set out relevant actions and resources needed to deliver shared priorities so that each partner, including the Council, is clear what is expected of them.	Status	Open	
What progress have we made	<p>The Public Service Board has published its first annual report for 2018/19, which sets out the progress made so far by the PSB to deliver the objectives set out in the well-being plan, with a particular focus on the six steps prioritised by the PSB. Supported by the Council’s Community and Partnership team, the PSB is developing a detailed action plan and performance management arrangements that capture the activity to deliver each step and link to the activity of the wider partnership groups that support delivery.</p> <p>The PSB Select Committee has held key partners leading on the six prioritised steps outlined in the PSB Plan to account for the progress made on the steps, ensuring their activity was in line with the sustainable development principle. Council will consider a report in October to amend the terms of reference of the committee to broaden its focus towards collaborative public service activity that takes place in Monmouthshire.</p>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Clear PSB well-being objectives allowing the PSB to allocate and prioritise resources to meet the objectives and establish delivery plans to achieve this.	Establish an action plan, performance framework and accountability arrangements to deliver the PSB’s well-being plan.	Head of Policy & Governance and Community & Partnership Development Manager	January 2020

Governance Proposals

Report	Governance – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016			
WAO Proposal	Strengthen scrutiny’s impact, status and effectiveness including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formally recording Cabinet responses to scrutiny recommendations and observations; and better co-ordination of Cabinet and select committee forward work programmes. 	Status	Open	
What progress have we made	<p>Formalised reporting of scrutiny recommendations to Cabinet Members was initially established through the drafting of chairs’ letters to the Cabinet Member. However, in order to ensure the Executive and the public are fully apprised of select committee outcome, the political report template has been revised to include a ‘consultees’ section, in which the outcomes can be listed.</p> <p>Democratic Services and the Scrutiny Manager continue to attend meetings of Senior Leadership Team and departmental management teams as necessary to discuss the cabinet and select committee forward work planner.</p>			

	A revised whole authority work planner is being implemented to improve the interface between officer meetings, select committees, Cabinet and Council. This will ensure that committees can plan their work programme more effectively and enable clearer tracking of decisions. This has been introduced but has yet to be fully embedded in working arrangements across the whole authority.			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Implement a revised whole authority planner	Head of Policy and Governance	November 2019
	More efficient processes and timely and clear reports for members	Review and refresh the report template and guidance and support this with training. Adopt the next phase of Modern Gov system to enable officers to self-serve when uploading reports. Enhance the advice and guidance areas on the intranet.	Local Democracy Manager	December 2019

Report	Governance: Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016. Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – March 2017			
WAO Proposal	Ensuring that budget savings mandates and service change reports systematically reflect stakeholder views and that these are taken into account during the decision making process.		Status	Open
What progress have we made	The Democratic Services Committee working group has been exploring proposals to increase public involvement in scrutiny and therefore inform service change proposals put to Cabinet and Council. Scrutiny capacity has been bolstered to provide some of the capacity needed to work in new ways and improvements to the robustness of forward planners will help councillors prioritise the issues where public involvement can add the greatest value. The authority will continue to build on previous budget engagement exercises to ensure that stakeholder views are reflected in proposals.			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Better informed members leading to more robust challenge and decision making.	Implement training on the revised report writing template and guidance	Scrutiny Manager & Policy and Performance Team	December 2019
	Better informed members leading to more robust challenge and decision making	Ensure that senior officers are held accountable for ensuring the reports relating to their service area meet the required standard; Embed the revised whole authority forward work planner	Head of Policy and Governance	December 2019

Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018			
WAO Proposal	Providing further training on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act for scrutiny members to improve their understanding and consideration of the Act when undertaking scrutiny activity.	Status	Open	
What progress have we made	<p>A range of training has been provided to members since the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This includes training for members on the new Public Service Board Select Committee, which has been in place since summer 2017.</p> <p>An updated report writing template and guidance note for reports to members has been developed and implemented, this includes a section on Equality and Future Generations Evaluation (including social justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting).</p> <p>A new training module on the Future Generations Act has been developed through the corporate training service and this is being made available to members to inform their role. Officer training sessions have been held. Further training on the act is scheduled for the autumn.</p>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Better challenge in meetings around whether the Council is complying with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.	Undertake further training on the Well-being of Future Generations Act as part of the implementation of the revised report writing process.	Head of Policy and Governance	October 2019

Information Management proposals

Report	WAO Information Management Review – December 2017			
WAO Proposal	PSN Accreditation – the Council should pursue PSN accreditation as a matter of urgency within the current financial year, bringing in external resources to achieve this if necessary.	Status	Open	
What progress have we made	A significant and comprehensive security review has been undertaken in order to gain Public Sector Network (PSN) accreditation. The most recent submission for accreditation has not been successful and PSN accreditation has not been achieved. The application will be resubmitted in September, following an IT health check undertaken by the SRS.			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	PSN accreditation is achieved.	Resubmit for accreditation once remaining action has been completed	Head of People Services	September 2019

Finance Proposals

Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015, Financial Resilience Assessment – February 2016 and Savings Planning – February 2017		
WAO Proposal	The Council should ensure that all budget mandates are costed and are sufficiently detailed. <i>All budget mandates should be fully costed and supported by information showing how each saving area will be achieved with an evaluation of its impact. This information should be produced on a timely basis to inform the agreement of the mandates by Members.</i>	Status	Open
	Ensure central specialist functions, such as finance and procurement, work more closely with individual service areas in identifying potential savings, the scope of savings achievable and the potential to use pooled budgets with partners.		
	Strengthen financial planning arrangements by developing a robust Medium Term Financial Plan that incorporates its Reserves Policy, Income Generation Strategy and Future Monmouthshire project		
What progress have we made	<p>Following the approval of the Corporate Plan, a financial strategy is being developed. Once finalised, this will apply a strategic lens to the council's finances in the medium to long term, and align to the delivery of the Corporate Plan to ensure its aspirations are sustainable. A draft was presented to Cabinet in November 2018.</p> <p>Alongside this, all service areas were asked to bring forward budget proposals for 2019/20, whilst simultaneously looking ahead and ensuring wherever possible, proposals support the medium term direction of travel. A consistent template was used to capture information on budget proposals with input and support from supporting service areas. A Future Generations Evaluation and equality impact assessment was completed on each proposal.</p> <p>Following public consultation and revised saving and pressure proposals, a balanced revenue budget proposal for 2019/20 was put forward to cabinet in February 2019 and approved by Council in March 2019.</p> <p>The medium term prognosis is still of concern and financial planning as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan is a continuing process. The Medium Term Financial planning model has been updated and is to be presented to Cabinet along with the proposed budget setting process for 2020/21 and over the medium term. Closer alignment between service's business planning arrangements and financial planning arrangements continues to be developed to improve the quality of service planning and financial planning, which also aligns to the delivery of the Corporate Plan to ensure its aspirations are sustainable.</p> <p>As part of the delivery of the Corporate Plan, a Commercial Strategy has been developed. The strategy seeks to enhance income generation, develop an approach to commercialising assets and create a commercial culture and ethos. The strategy has a short-, medium- and long-term view and aims to provide a framework, with defined objectives, for new commercial projects and for the delivery of future commercial activity. The Council has acquired two commercial investments and any further investments will be considered by the Investment Committee. The annual review of Investment Committee and its activity is to be presented to Cabinet in October 2019.</p>		

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Fully costed and robust budget proposals for member scrutiny.	Continue to establish a clear Medium Term Financial Plan and associated budget proposals	Chief Officer Resources	March 2020
	A robust and realistic Medium Term Financial Plan to support and facilitate strategic planning	Complete the development of a Financial Strategy	SLT	March 2020

Asset Management proposals

Report	WAO review of Asset Management – November 2017		
WAO Proposal	<p>The Council's asset management arrangements could be strengthened by: Developing and delivering a long-term sustainable strategy for its assets based on a thorough assessment of needs, costs and benefits supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ short, medium and long-term performance indicators; ○ embedded governance arrangements to support the strategic management of assets; ○ IT asset management systems which integrate more effectively with other systems to facilitate better information capture and use; and ○ Utilising information arising from stakeholder consultation and engagement including what the Council has learnt about its experience of its community asset transfers to better inform its decision-making. 	Status	Open
What progress have we made	<p>Following approval of the Corporate Plan, the Asset Management Strategy 2018-2022, and associated business plan, has been revised to align to its delivery. The plan is being implemented and actions have been integrated into the relevant business plans for ongoing monitoring and progress reporting. The Asset Management Strategy 2018-2022 includes the asset investment policy, which provides a formal policy for the acquisition of investment opportunities that will derive a net return to the Council, provide the governance and delegated authority arrangement and establish criteria to support a proposed acquisition. The Asset Management Group has integrated with the former Capital Working group and the inaugural meeting held.</p> <p>As part of the delivery of the Corporate Plan, a Commercial Strategy has been developed, which seeks to enhance income generation, develop an approach to commercialising assets and create a commercial culture and ethos. The strategy has a short-, medium- and long-term view and provides a framework for new commercial projects and for the delivery of future commercial activity.</p> <p>The current software will be replaced with a system that incorporates the Financial Asset Register as well as providing a comprehensive solution for the effective management of property data. The scope for this is being agreed but is taking longer than originally planned. A directorate restructure is currently underway; when this has been established, the focus will turn to the IT system.</p>		

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Clarity over the Council's approach to the use of its assets to support robust decision making.	Replace the IT system with a system that incorporates the Financial Asset Register as well as providing a comprehensive solution for the effective management of property data	Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services	February 2020

Children's safeguarding proposals

Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding– August 2018			
WAO Proposal	<p>Embed all aspects of safe recruitment, induction and training consistently.</p> <p>In particular:</p> <p>a. improve training records on safeguarding to show why the person received that particular level of training, when the training was received, and when it needs to be reviewed;</p> <p>b. ensure all people who have a specific role in safeguarding undertake appropriate training; and</p> <p>c. clarify when enhanced DBS checks are required and ensure these are obtained in line with guidance.</p>		Status	Open
What progress have we made	<p>As a minimum each employee is required to undertake basic safeguarding training. A Whole Authority database has been established, there remains further work for each service to validate the current information which when complete will give a comprehensive establishment record of who requires which level of training.</p> <p>A mechanism is now in place to record training completed via the corporate training team, ensuring this is consistently used and completed remains an ongoing action.</p> <p>Since the introduction of electronic DBS processing in August 2018 all ID checkers are required to attend mandatory 1 hour DBS training. Training covers eligibility and signposts to the eligibility tool provided by the Home Office and information on the Council's intranet, the hub, regarding the policy.</p>			
	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	An appropriately vetted workforce that understands its safeguarding responsibilities.	Complete service validation of database and periodically review to keep up to date	Safeguarding leads, all directorates	December 2019
	An appropriately vetted workforce that understands its safeguarding responsibilities.	Ensure mechanism to record training is consistently used and completed	Head of People Services	March 2020

Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding– August 2018											
WAO Proposal	<p>Ensure control arrangements are consistently applied and improve performance monitoring arrangements around safeguarding to include all areas of service operation to address all gaps in accountability. This should include issuing clear guidance to managers on information on safeguarding that should be included in reports to Members.</p>		Status	Open								
What progress have we made	<p>Service safeguarding arrangements remain part of the principles of Service Business Planning 2019/2022 which all services must apply in their plans. 2018/2021 plans were corporately appraised by the Policy and Performance team against the principles, including a section to identify the inclusion of activity related to safeguarding. It is the responsibility of the service to ensure the action in their service business plan on safeguarding is accurate and robust linked to the outcome of their SAFE. The SAFE Audits and action plans are key to measuring compliance to the Corporate Safeguarding Policy at a service level. Each Department management team completes a SAFE, this is a self-assessment across specified standards to assess safeguarding compliance across services and to identify where improvement could be made.</p> <p>An updated report writing template and guidance note for reports to members has been developed and implemented, this includes a section on Equality and Future Generations Evaluation (including social justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting). The associated Equality and Future Generations Evaluation form, has also been reviewed and includes a specific section on safeguarding with associated guidance. Specific report writing training has not yet been established, instead training and awareness raising has been undertaken using existing mechanisms including the Council's intranet and existing training on Managers Induction. Further report writing awareness raising and training will continue to be provided.</p>											
Further action planned	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Desired Result</th> <th>Action</th> <th>Responsible Officer</th> <th>Timescale</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Corporate assurance that safeguarding arrangements are implemented across the Council.</td> <td>Complete an appraisal of the quality of service business plans developed for 2019/22</td> <td>Performance Manager</td> <td>September 2019</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Corporate assurance that safeguarding arrangements are implemented across the Council.	Complete an appraisal of the quality of service business plans developed for 2019/22	Performance Manager	September 2019			
Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale									
Corporate assurance that safeguarding arrangements are implemented across the Council.	Complete an appraisal of the quality of service business plans developed for 2019/22	Performance Manager	September 2019									

Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children's safeguarding– August 2018			
WAO Proposal	<p>Improve the Council's commissioning and contracting arrangements in relation to safeguarding children by finalising guidance on commissioning, contracting and volunteering from a safeguarding perspective.</p>		Status	Open
What progress have we made	<p>A Self – assessment template and minimum standards have been developed and Social Care & Health (SCH) have been the first area to complete the self- assessment. Behind the schedule that was originally planned, the roll out to further areas will form part of planned workshops from September onwards and will be part of the SAFE Audit process.</p>			

Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Assurance that children are safeguarded irrespective of the service provider being in house or external to the Council	Roll out the self-assessment as part of the planned workshops from September onwards	Chief Officers/Heads of Service	March 2020

Service User Perspective

Report	Service User Perspective Review, Customer Contact – May 2019			
WAO Proposal	Improve customer contact arrangements taking into account user feedback		Status	Open
	Improve customer care in the customer contact arrangements to ensure citizens views are genuinely acknowledged and addressed			
What progress have we made	<p>We were pleased with the feedback received on the Hubs, and acknowledge that some people fed back that they were less happy with the handling of their complaint.</p> <p>We will continue to promote the My Monmouthshire app and listen to feedback from users across all channels to improve how these operate, improving the ways in which people can contact the council. We have also launched a chatbot to increase contact channels.</p> <p>Customer-facing teams use feedback and continually strive to improve customer care using both informal and formal mechanisms. We will ensure that customers who provide feedback and wish to receive a response get one.</p>			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Customer contact arrangements take account of user needs	Use customer feedback to improve service and experience	Head of Policy and Governance	October 2019

Report	Service User Perspective Review, Customer Contact – May 2019			
WAO Proposal	Routinely seek feedback from people who use the Community Hubs, My Monmouthshire App and the Compliments, Comments and Complaints arrangements to identify improvements to customer contact arrangements;		Status	Open
	Seek feedback from people who do not currently use the Community Hubs, My Monmouthshire App or Compliments, Comments and Complaints arrangements to understand why;			
What progress	We will continue to use community events to seek feedback on our arrangements and to test and launch new initiatives as well as using feedback from the app user group and feedback received at the hubs.			

have we made	We continue to use feedback from complaints and compliments to improve our customer contact arrangements.			
	We provide a broad range of channels to give people a choice in how to contact the council. We are always keeping this under review and have introduced the My Monmouthshire app and more recently Monty, the council's chatbot to keep pace with changing user preferences while making traditional channels such as telephony and face-to-face enquiries more cost effective. We have used events such as the Usk show to gauge feedback about usability.			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Arrangements take account of user feedback	Continue to use feedback from complaints and compliments to improve our customer contact arrangements	Customer Relations Manager	October 2019
	Arrangements take account of user feedback	Continue to use community events and other mechanisms to seek feedback	Head of Policy and Governance	October 2019

Report	Service User Perspective Review, Customer Contact – May 2019			
WAO Proposal	Share learning about improvements made to individual Community Hubs with other Community Hub staff;		Status	Open
What progress have we made	Managers liaise with other council departments and outside agencies to share learning; this is disseminated to all hub colleagues in a timely manner to inform and improve practice.			
	We will continue to use the service plan and team meetings to evaluate what has worked and roll-out successful developments county-wide.			
Further action planned	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
	Good practice and service improvements are shared and if appropriate, implemented across similar facilities.	Use the Community hubs service plan and team meetings to evaluate what has worked and roll-out successful developments county-wide	Community Hub Managers	March 2020

Report	Service User Perspective Review, Customer Contact – May 2019			
WAO Proposal	Ensure that the Council meets the standards it sets such as in complaints		Status	Open
What progress have we made	We will continue to remind staff of good complaints handling and monitor our responsiveness against these standards.			

	Desired Result	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
Further action planned	Meeting standards set such as in complaints.	Continue to remind staff of good complaints handling and monitor our responsiveness against these standards.	Customer relations manager	Ongoing

Well-being of Future Generations examination of developing a range of options to improve rural transport

Report	Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of developing a range of options to improve rural transport – May 2019			
Outline	Examination of the extent to which the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking the step to develop a range of options to improve rural transport to meet the following wellbeing objective: The Council delivers better infrastructure connectivity and opportunity	Status	N/A	
Outcome	<p>The Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in setting the step ‘to develop a range of options to improve rural transport’ but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working</p> <p>The Council is at an early stage of understanding long-term needs and solutions.</p> <p>The Council has identified some of the problems caused by the lack of rural transport but has not yet identified potential solutions.</p> <p>The Council is committed to integrated solutions but rural transport is not well recognised within Council and partner plans.</p> <p>The Council has started to collaborate in the planning and scoping of some solutions and would benefit from engaging with more partners to identify root causes and additional sustainable solutions.</p> <p>Whilst there are positive examples of stakeholder involvement, the Council could benefit from involving the public at an earlier stage and producing comprehensive equality impact assessments for all policy decisions on major service change.</p>			
Proposals	Desired Result			
	WAO did not make proposals for improvement in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFG Act) examinations report but did highlight some areas of development which the Council plans to act on as set out in the action plan included in the report.			

Closed Wales Audit Office Proposal for Improvement

Performance Management Proposals

Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015		
WAO Proposal	<p>Improve performance management arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring planned improvements are tangible; • improving target setting to better reflect desired improvement and ensuring resources are allocated to deliver Council priorities through the Medium Term Financial Plan; • developing arrangements to identify intended outcomes, targets and data collection arrangements when services are being delivered through alternative models; 	Status	Closed
What progress have we made	<p>A corporate plan has been developed that sets out a clear direction and purpose for the Council up to 2022. It contains five priority goals, which are also the Council’s well-being objectives, and can be measured over time using measures included in the plan. Specific targets for these performance measures were reported to cabinet as part of the six month progress report against the plan. An annual report on progress is due to be presented to council in September, which will include an update on progress towards achieving the performance measures.</p> <p>Detailed activity to deliver the corporate plan is contained in service business plans, and the alignment between business plans and the corporate plan has been appraised. Resources to deliver the plan are being allocated through the Medium Term Financial Plan. Closer alignment between service’s business planning arrangements and financial planning arrangements continues to be developed to improve the quality of service planning and financial planning, which also aligns to the delivery of the Corporate Plan, to ensure its aspirations are sustainable. The role and purpose of service planning has been reviewed and a revised process established aligned to the corporate plan. Target setting guidance has been developed and incorporated as part of the Council’s service business planning process for services to use when developing targets. Training sessions on business planning have been delivered through TalentLab, with further sessions planned.</p> <p>Following approval of the corporate plan, the Council’s enabling strategies were revised to align to the delivery of the corporate plan. Clear principles were established, which the plans followed, to ensure a more robust approach to development. These include a specific section of performance measures and targets to evaluate performance. Progress against the enabling strategies will continue to be reviewed.</p> <p>To meet our requirements under the Future Generations Act, the way we measure and evaluate our performance will need to continue to evolve to ensure we evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of current service delivery, while also tracking progress against longer term community well-being objectives.</p>		

An annual update on the effectiveness of the authority’s performance management arrangements will continue to be reported to Audit Committee.

Report	Information Technology – Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – October 2016 Whole Authority review of children’s safeguarding – August 2018		
WAO Proposal	Review the Council’s risk management arrangements to assure itself it manages risks consistently across directorates and identifies, escalates, and addresses risks in a timely and appropriate way.	Status	Closed
	Integrate safeguarding across the Council’s policy framework. In particular: Re-frame the strategic risk register, to enable a SMART-er approach to measuring impact of actions taken in mitigation of identified risk.		
What progress have we made	<p>The Strategic Risk Register is updated based on the latest evidence available in line with the Council’s strategic risk management policy. The latest risk register has been reviewed to ensure it includes risks to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. All service business plans have been reviewed to identify any strategic risks that require escalation to the strategic risk register. A substantive update of the strategic risk register was completed in January 2019; this was reported to Audit Committee and Cabinet in March 2019.</p> <p>The format of the strategic risk register has been updated to include timescales and responsibility holders for each mitigating action and includes an update on the progress and impact of implementing each action identified. A refresh of the Council’s strategic risk management policy and guidance has been completed. These updates have taken account of the action plan to improve risk management arrangements in response to the findings from an Internal Audit report. An action plan to address any remaining areas for improvement from the internal audit report on the Council’s strategic risk management arrangements continues to be updated and reviewed.</p> <p>Risk assessment remains an area in service business plans that is often particularly identified for improvement to strengthen the capture and management of risks facing services. Appraisal of all business plans takes place on an annual basis, and training sessions on business planning have been delivered through TalentLab, with further sessions planned. The Performance Team are continuing to work with services business plan holders to strengthen risk recording and monitoring in plans.</p> <p>Strategic risk management arrangements will continue to form part of the annual update on the effectiveness of the authority’s performance management arrangements reported to Audit Committee</p>		

Governance Proposals

Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018		
WAO Proposal	Assessing the impact of the workshop approach.	Status	Closed
What progress have we made	<p>Scrutiny workshops have been held on the Local Development Plan and are progressing well, with wider membership attending than the host select committee. The timing of these workshops has been amended to maximise attendance and the new scrutiny website will host the presentations and recordings of workshops to assist members who cannot attend in engaging with the work. The workshops are enabling members to play a much greater policy development role at an early stage, which has been highlighted by members.</p> <p>Although there has been no formal evaluation process for the use of workshops, they are continuing and their effectiveness is being monitored to ensure they are fit for purpose and benefit the scrutiny function. The Scrutiny business plan makes reference to the use of workshops and records, on a quarterly basis, the activity surrounding workshops and how they are being received.</p>		

Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018		
WAO Proposal	Clarifying the role of Cabinet Members when attending select committees to observe.	Status	Closed
What progress have we made	<p>Cabinet members' role in the scrutiny process for accountability is clear and they are welcome to observe any scrutiny meetings in line with the Council's code of conduct which states that:</p> <p>"Members of the Council are entitled to attend any formal meeting of the Council, its committees or sub-committees or the Cabinet, where they are not a member of that body; their attendance and right to speak is at the discretion of the Chair of the body."</p> <p>The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol has been revised to clarify the role of cabinet members when attending select committees, either to answer questions or to observe the meeting. This will be revised within the Council's Constitution when it is next updated.</p> <p>It is important to ensure clarity for the public as to whether cabinet members are being held to account by select committees or are being welcomed to observe. As such, if cabinet members are being held accountable, they will be seated on the witness table to ensure a clear distinction from select committee members. If cabinet members are attending to observe, they will be asked to do so from the public gallery.</p>		

Report	'Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Review – August 2018		
WAO Proposal	Reviewing the level, type and resilience of the scrutiny support function to meet future challenges.	Status	Closed
What progress have we made	A new role of Policy and Scrutiny Officer has been established and will be undergoing a recruitment process. The additional post will provide a sustainable solution, which will increase the resilience of the scrutiny function.		

Report	Corporate Assessment – November 2015		
WAO Proposal	Adopt a more planned, risk-assessed approach to partnership and collaborative working to make better use of resources.	Status	Closed
What progress have we made	<p>A community governance review has been completed. The review identified the need to consider new arrangements for area committees and North Monmouthshire Area Committee was subsequently identified as a pilot to act as the primary mechanism for influencing decisions in the locality. An evaluation of the pilot was completed and the learning will be used to inform developments in the other areas with the changes being overseen by the Democratic Services Committee.</p> <p>The Community and Partnership Development team have been working closely with Community & Town Councils to develop local cluster meetings and a network of Town Council clerks. This support will assist those Town Councils who have duties under the Act to align the work they carry out in their communities to the broader well-being objectives for the county, and to better develop relationships with the PSB.</p> <p>The Community and Partnerships Development Team have worked to develop stronger community networks of volunteers, active citizens and third sector groups who are passionate about their community and who recognise the difference they can make.</p>		

Report	Governance: Corporate Assessment Follow-on Review – June 2016. Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes – March 2017		
WAO Proposal	Further improve the clarity of reports that members receive to ensure they have access to appropriate and timely information in a format that is easy to read and understand.	Status	Closed
	Improving the quality of its options appraisals by providing information showing how options have been consistently evaluated.		
	Setting out at the point of decision on service change proposals how the impact of proposed changes is going to be measured and monitored		

What progress have we made	<p>Changes to the report writing template, incorporating a section and clear guidance on options appraisals, have been embedded. A new process has been introduced to ensure more timely and complete forward planners. A Monthly members Bulletin highlighting forthcoming key decisions and significant issues under scrutiny was introduced with limited success and will continue to evolve. A new section on evaluation was incorporated into reports and Democratic services committee has endorsed a process to ensure effective oversight of the evaluation of decisions working with Audit Committee and Chairs of Select Committees.</p> <p>A Scrutiny and Governance session was held as part of the Managers induction training.</p>
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Children’s safeguarding proposals

Report	WAO Whole Authority review of children’s safeguarding– August 2018		
WAO Proposal	<p>Integrate safeguarding across the Council’s policy framework. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Produce a ‘project plan’ identifying the underpinning work required and associated timescales to fully incorporate the Council’s approach to integrating child and adult safeguarding. b. Re-frame the strategic risk register, to enable a SMART-er approach to measuring impact of actions taken in mitigation of identified risk. c. Strengthen safeguarding policy and guidance in the areas identified in this report. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – data protection arrangements and guidance linked to safeguarding; – embed whistleblowing policy arrangements through training and awareness raising; and – revise taxi licensing arrangements strengthening health and safety requirements. 	Status	Closed
What progress have we made	<p>Integration of the service management responsibility for Adult and Children’s safeguarding has been completed. At present there are no plans to further integrate.</p> <p>The format of the strategic risk register has been updated to include timescales and responsibility holders for each mitigating action and includes an update on the progress and impact of implementing each action identified. The strategic risk register continues to be updated in the revised format.</p> <p>The Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been updated in line with GDPR. The Whistleblowing Policy is available on the People Services hub where all HR policies are accessed. HR business partner meetings with all managers now include awareness raising around all new policies, including Whistleblowing policy.</p> <p>The Taxi Driver Policy was amended, and approved by Licensing Committee, on 12th June 2018. This provided more stringent requirements on the suitability of taxi drivers and operators, in line with Institute of Licensing national guidance.</p>		

Wales Audit Office National Studies Published since last update

Procuring Residual and Food Waste Treatment Capacity	
National Study	www.audit.wales/publication/procuring-residual-and-food-waste-treatment-capacity
Summary	<p>This report focuses on the provision of infrastructure for food waste recycling through anaerobic digestion and recovery through energy from waste. It forms one of a set of three related pieces of work on waste management in Wales that will be published by the Auditor General for Wales. The other two pieces of work have considered issues relating to waste prevention and municipal recycling.</p> <p>The report found a Welsh Government procurement programme to help councils set up food and residual waste contracts has been well-managed. But, several councils have opted out of the Programme, generally at a higher cost for residual waste treatment, and some are still reliant on landfill.</p>
Recommendations in the report	The reports make two recommendations for particular consideration by Welsh Government.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The Council’s Waste and Street Services team has received the report. The team are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council’s arrangements as part of their service planning.

Local Government Services to Rural Communities	
National Study	http://www.audit.wales/publication/local-government-services-rural-communities
Summary	This report examines the changing face of rural Wales and looks at the demographic challenges in providing council services to dispersed communities. The study found that councils are not yet finding sustainable ways to help rural communities overcome the challenges they face.
Recommendations in the report	The report makes four recommendations for consideration by Welsh Government, PSBs and the local authorities.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	Relevant council services contributed to the report as part of the fieldwork undertaken by WAO. The Council has received the report and relevant service areas related to the review are considering the findings that are relevant to the Council’s arrangements, as part of their service planning. The Council also attended a recent WAO seminar on innovative approaches to public services in rural communities.

National Study	Waste Management in Wales: Municipal Recycling http://www.audit.wales/publication/waste-management-wales-municipal-recycling
Summary	More collaboration has helped make recycling methods more consistent and encouraged participation, although waste management service costs show surprising variation. Weight-based statutory targets have driven a much improved recycling rate over time, but could better reflect wider sustainability considerations.
Recommendations in the report	The reports make four recommendations for particular consideration by Welsh Government.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The Council's Waste and Street Services team has received the report. The team are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council's arrangements as part of their service planning.

National Study	Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer http://www.audit.wales/publication/provision-local-government-services-rural-communities-community-asset-transfer
Summary	This document complements the Auditor General's report on Local Government Services to Rural Communities, published in November 2018. It highlights and summarises the study findings specifically relating to Community Asset Transfers (CATs) This document is a learning resource for local authorities to help them improve their approach to CATs in rural areas.
Recommendations in the report	The reports make two recommendations for particular consideration by local authorities.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The Council's Estates team has received the report. The team are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council's arrangements as part of their service planning.

National Study	The maturity of local government in use of data http://www.audit.wales/publication/maturity-local-government-use-data
Summary	<p>This study assesses whether local government has the right building blocks and culture in place to capitalise on the data that it holds.</p> <p>The report is split into 4 parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Part 1 of the report, WAO study the strategic approach taken by local authorities to making better use of data. 2. In Part 2, WAO summarise local authorities' data protection work and how they are progressing sharing data with other public bodies. 3. In Part 3, WAO examine whether local authorities have the skills and capacity to gather, share and analyse data. 4. In Part 4, WAO consider how effectively local authorities use available data to agree future priorities and allocate resources. <p>Based on these findings, the Auditor General has concluded that local authorities are slowly developing a culture that values and uses data to its full potential to help improve services and outcomes.</p>

Recommendations in the report	The reports make four recommendations for particular consideration by local authorities.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The Council's Performance and Digital teams have received the report. The teams are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council's arrangements as part of developments of the Council's use of data.

National Study	Waste Management in Wales - Preventing waste http://www.audit.wales/publication/preventing-waste
Summary	This report considers the level of priority that the Welsh Government has given to waste prevention and progress towards waste prevention targets. It also considers whether the Welsh Government is keeping track with its waste prevention targets and the quality of data available to the Welsh Government with which to measure progress.
Recommendations in the report	The reports make three recommendations for particular consideration by Welsh Government.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The Council's Waste and Street Services team has received the report. The team are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council's arrangements as part of their service planning.

National Study	The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales http://www.audit.wales/publication/effectiveness-local-planning-authorities-wales
Summary	This report considers the progress of local planning authorities in delivering their new responsibilities and the extent to which they are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle contained within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The report also considers how efficient and effective the 'local planning system' is, focusing on their performance, income and expenditure to determine how resilient services are. The report also looks at decision making and stakeholder engagement.
Recommendations in the report	The reports make five recommendations for particular consideration by local planning authorities and Welsh Government.
Monmouthshire County Council lead	The Council's Planning team has received the report. The team are considering the findings of the report which are relevant to the Council's arrangements as part of their service planning. The report will also be incorporated in the Planning Services Annual performance report, which is planned for scrutiny in September.